



# Chapter 14.

## Spelling

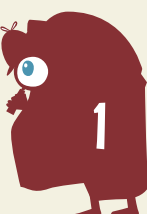
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### Before reading this chapter

#### Web activity 1

1. What do you already know about spelling and the formation of words?
2. Here are some rules of thumb regarding spelling – do you know others?
  - a. Always “i” before “e” – except after “c”: *achieve* ↔ *receive*.
  - b. *Full* and *all* are spelled with *ll* but when these elements are used as parts of longer words, they lose one *l*: *beautiful*, *wonderful*, *almost* and *always*.
  - c. When *lose* means *miste* (*I don't want to lose my dog*), it has lost one *o* compared to the adjective *loose* (*the dog is loose*).
  - d. *Choose* means *vælge*, so you must have two *o*'s to choose among.
3. What is the connection between spelling and pronunciation – and why are so many spelling problems connected to pronunciation?
4. What do you know about spell checkers and why you cannot always trust them?
5. Which morphological spelling rules do you know concerning the doubling of consonants, the suffixes *-(e)s* and *-(e)d* and the inflection of words ending in *-y*, *-fe*, and *-o*?
6. Capital letters are used in proper nouns like in Danish e.g. *Karen* and *Denmark*. In which lexical areas do we use more capital letters in English than in Danish?



7. What do you know about the problems concerning whether we should spell words in one words or two? What do we tend to do in Danish and what about English?
8. What do you know about how we can form new words by using prefixes (*in-*, *ex-* etc.)?
9. What do you know about suffixes (*-ment*, *-ic* etc.) and their connection to word classes?
10. What do you know about differences in British and American spelling?
11. How were you taught spelling at school? What was good/bad and why?
12. How do you best learn spelling?
13. Can you think of some good ways of teaching spelling?

## Spelling and pronunciation

### Web activity 2

Read these poems that are also concerned with spelling and pronunciation. Discuss them from a teacher's perspective, e.g. could you use them at school?

#### Text 2-A

*"When the English Tongue we Speak"<sup>1</sup>*

*When the English tongue we speak  
 Why is break not rhymed with weak?  
 Won't you tell me why it's true  
 We say sew, but also few?  
 And the maker of a verse  
 Cannot rhyme his horse with worse?  
 Beard is not the same as heard,  
 Cord is different from word,  
 Cow is cow, low is low,  
 Shoe is never rhymed with foe.  
 Think of hose and dose and lose,  
 And think of goose and yet of choose,  
 Think of comb and tomb and bomb,  
 Doll and roll and home and some.  
 And since pay is rhymed with say,  
 Why not paid with said, I pray?  
 Think of blood and food and good;  
 Mould is not pronounced like could.  
 Why is done, but gone and lone -  
 Is there any reason known?  
 To sum it up, it seems to me  
 That sounds and letters don't agree.*

You can listen to the poem here: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FmAaX0kREGQ>

#### Text 2-B

Read the lyrics to the poem "The Chaos?" by G. Nolst Trenite a.k.a. "Charivarius" here: <http://www.mipmip.org/tidbits/pronunciation.shtml>

You can listen to the entire poem here: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L0hjhu1rUKM>



## Principles of spelling

### Web activity 3

1. Follow this link <http://able2know.org/topic/13579-1> and find a joke called *Ze Drem - An anonymous EU announcement passed on to us by Brian Fawcett of Cambridge, England* on spelling. Which of the four principles does it apply, violate and make fun of?
2. How does the spelling make fun of Euro-English?

## Spelling problems

### Web activity 4.

Here are some tasks that might help audio-visual problems. Try them and discuss them from a teacher's perspective. Do you have other ideas to help audio-visual problems?

1. Identify and correct the mistakes concerning homophones in the text "The Sting in the Tale": [http://chris.denby.eu/phonetics/exercises/homophones\\_and\\_homographs/the\\_sting\\_in\\_the\\_tail/the\\_sting\\_in\\_the\\_tail.pdf](http://chris.denby.eu/phonetics/exercises/homophones_and_homographs/the_sting_in_the_tail/the_sting_in_the_tail.pdf) (the solution is found at the end of this chapter).
2. Here is a memory game on homophones or near-homophones<sup>3</sup>.
  - a. Cut out the slips and play the game by taking turns turning two cards. Say the words out loud to prove they are real homophones, if they are not, make sure you say them distinctly differently. Who will win most tricks?
  - b. Comment on this from a teacher's perspective.
    - Could it be a good idea only to work on the real homophones first – or ask the pupils to sort the words into two piles?
      - a. Real homophones
      - b. Other words that are mixed up
    - Could it be a good idea to ask the pupils to write sentences with those they find most difficult?
    - Could it be a good idea to ask the pupils to keep their own check list regarding homophones or other words they mix up?

ALLOUD	ALLOWED	BACK	BAG	BUY
DEAR	DEER	PEACE	PIECE	BY
SO	SOW	BE	BEE	THEIR
THERE	TO	TOO	OF	OFF
WERE	WHERE	WHICH	WITCH	WHOLE
HOLE	WITH	WHIT	BEEN	BIN
FEED	FEET	HE'S	HIS	ITS



3. For each word, write another word that sounds the same but is spelled differently.

Example: *plain - plane*

- |                       |                         |
|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| a. <i>ate</i> _____   | h. <i>whole</i> _____   |
| b. <i>board</i> _____ | i. <i>steak</i> _____   |
| c. <i>break</i> _____ | j. <i>boarder</i> _____ |
| d. <i>sail</i> _____  | k. <i>right</i> _____   |
| e. <i>duel</i> _____  | l. <i>waist</i> _____   |
| f. <i>led</i> _____   | m. <i>coarse</i> _____  |
| g. <i>sea</i> _____   |                         |

You can find a list of more homophones here: <http://www.bifroest.demon.co.uk/misc/homophones-list.html>

4. Follow this link to a game of dominoes with homophones: [http://www.primaryresources.co.uk/english/docs/homophone\\_dominoes.doc](http://www.primaryresources.co.uk/english/docs/homophone_dominoes.doc)

5. Here are some exercises on silent letters

1. Mark all the silent letters in each of the following sentences:<sup>4</sup>

- They were singing a psalm to honour the world-famous psychologist as he was laid to rest in the tomb.*
- The psychiatrist was attacked with a knife in the knee as he was walking in the field.*
- He whistled as he fastened his sword and tied his belt.*
- My family ought to have left me at least half the Christmas cake on Wednesday.*

2. Silent letters

Many words contain letter that are not pronounced.

Read aloud the words below and identify the letter in each word that is not pronounced:

- |                        |                     |                      |
|------------------------|---------------------|----------------------|
| a. <i>raspberry</i>    | j. <i>listen</i>    | s. <i>talk</i>       |
| b. <i>climb</i>        | k. <i>knife</i>     | t. <i>handsome</i>   |
| c. <i>choir</i>        | l. <i>hour</i>      | u. <i>sign</i>       |
| d. <i>knee</i>         | m. <i>two</i>       | v. <i>psychology</i> |
| e. <i>island</i>       | n. <i>Christmas</i> | w. <i>every</i>      |
| f. <i>half</i>         | o. <i>answer</i>    | x. <i>business</i>   |
| g. <i>column</i>       | p. <i>vegetable</i> | y. <i>tomb</i>       |
| h. <i>know</i>         | q. <i>comb</i>      | z. <i>subtle</i>     |
| i. <i>handkerchief</i> | r. <i>honest</i>    | æ. <i>calm</i>       |

3. Make three lists and sort the words according to their silent letters: **w**, **k** and **g**.

*wrote, knowledge, sign, wren, kneel, knot, wrong, wrath, gnat, gnarl, wrench, knave, knee and wry.*

6. Can you explain why the following words do not get double consonants?

- hope – hoping*
- suffer – suffering*
- attack – attacking*
- ruin – ruining*

7. Here are some links to additional texts related to pronunciation and spelling. Discuss whether you could use them with pupils:

- The tongue twister "Whether the weather be fine": <http://edahellocircle.homestead.com/toungetwistersweather.html>



- Jokes and puns: <http://iteslj.org/c/jokes-puns.html> and here is a joke on homophones: <http://www.booksie.com/jokes/miscellaneous/jack12/a-joke-on-homophones-words-sounding-same>
- The poem “Streemin”<sup>5</sup>: <http://www.sfms.edu.sg/teacherwebpage/Faiszah/Teaching.html>

## Spell checkers

### Web activity 5.

1. Rewrite some of the stanzas from the poem “Candidate for a Pullet Surprise” (also sometimes called “Owed to the spell checker”) so that the spelling is correct.  
Here is a link for the text: [http://bdb.co.za/shackle/articles/pullet\\_surprise.htm](http://bdb.co.za/shackle/articles/pullet_surprise.htm)
2. What can you learn about spelling and the limitations of spell checkers from this task?
3. What is the pun on the title?
4. Discuss the task from a teacher’s perspective – could you use it with pupils?

### Web activity 6.

Here is a rewritten excerpt on spell checkers from the grammar *Stifinderen*<sup>6</sup>. Comment on this from a teacher’s perspective:

#### “Hvad er stavekontrollen?”

*Stavekontrollen er som en lille ordbog, men den aner ikke noget om, hvad ord betyder – eller hvad du mener. Det, den gør, er alene at sætte røde streger under de bogstavs sammensætninger, den ikke kender.*

1. *Stavekontrollen reagerer, hvis du har skrevet et ord, som ikke findes.*

*Heer is a boy hwo is very gut at grammar.*

Faktisk er der ikke tre, men fire stavfejl i eksemplet her, da meningen må være: *Here is a boy who is very good at grammar.* Men ordet *gut* findes på engelsk – det giver bare ingen mening i denne sætning.

Stavekontrollen reagerer også, hvis du kommer til at skrive samme ord to gange efter hinanden:

*Here is a boy boy.*

Men nogle gange er det jo meningen, at der skal være to ens ord efter hinanden:

*He said that that would not be possible.  
He had had a great holiday in Spain.*

#### Stavekontrollen kan ikke stave for dig:

Når du har skrevet en tekst, vil dit skriveprogram nogle gange sætte røde streger under noget.



## 2. Røde streger under ord betyder, at du skal undersøge, om der er en fejl.

Det gør du ved at højreklikke og se, om Word har et forslag til, hvad fejlen skal rettes til (du kan tjekke hele dokumentet på én gang, ved at trykke på F7-tasten)."

Then Stifinderen gives an example with *he skreemed*:

"Her ved du godt, at det, du mente var *screamed* og ikke en af de andre muligheder. Men det er dig, der skal fortælle stavekontrollen, hvad du mente ved at klikke på den rigtige mulighed. Husk altid at du er klogere end stavekontrollen. Du ved nemlig, hvad du vil sige, og du ved, hvad ord betyder [...]"

## 3. Stavekontrollen kan ikke tænke for dig.

Fordi stavekontrollen kun kan undersøge, om et ord findes i dens ordbog eller ej, reagerer den ikke, hvis du fx har skrevet *how*, når du egentlig mener *who*. Bare fordi der ikke er røde streger, betyder det ikke, at du har skrevet det, du tror – og det, du gerne vil.

## Other issues in spelling

### Web activity 7.

Find out which more neutral spellings that the following very informal spellings correspond to. Would you accept such spellings?

*X-mas*  
*Donut*  
*Nite*  
*U*  
*Thanx*  
*tho*

### Web activity 8.

Some semantic problems are called *eggcorns*. Find out why at <http://eggcorns.lascribe.net/about/>

### Web activity 9.

English has the expression *damp squib* about something that was intended to be exciting or effective but turned out to be a disappointment, the literal meaning referring to the fact that damp firework will not light and is disappointing. However, many people in Britain instead write *damp squid*<sup>7</sup>.

1. Can you figure out why?
2. Which category of spelling mistakes does it belong to?

## Capital letters

### Web activity 10.

Translate the following sentences and comment on the activity from a teacher's perspective. How can you teach capitalization?

1. *Jøderne blev forfulgt af nazisterne under anden verdenskrig.*
2. *Der er mange indiske restauranter i London.*



3. *Han er aldrig hjemme om søndagen og mandagen.*
4. *I middelalderen sagde man at der var varmt i helvede.*
5. *General Dwight D. Eisenhower var øverstbefalende for de allierede styrker i Europa under 2. verdenskrig.*
6. *Vi rejser til Indien i slutningen af december og begyndelsen af januar.*
7. *Mange svenskere tror ikke på (to believe in) djævelen.*
8. *Jeg foretrækker (to prefer) påske frem for (to) pinse.*
9. *Hinduer og muslimer kan ikke enes i Indien.*
10. *Den britiske statsminister David Cameron er konservativ partileder.*
11. *Normannernes erobring af England fandt sted i 1066.*

## Spelling and morphology

### Web activity 11.

Practise morphological spelling rules in the exercises below and discuss them from a teacher's perspective. When and how will you teach the morphological spelling rules?

11-1.

Here are some nouns ending in *-o*. How should they be spelled in the plural?

- |                   |                    |                   |
|-------------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| a. <i>buffalo</i> | g. <i>mosquito</i> | m. <i>torpedo</i> |
| b. <i>casino</i>  | h. <i>photo</i>    | n. <i>veto</i>    |
| c. <i>echo</i>    | i. <i>tomato</i>   | o. <i>video</i>   |
| d. <i>ghetto</i>  | j. <i>potato</i>   | p. <i>volcano</i> |
| e. <i>hero</i>    | k. <i>radio</i>    | q. <i>zero</i>    |
| f. <i>inferno</i> | l. <i>solo</i>     |                   |

11-2.

In the following, find the words ending in *-ies* and *-eys* and explain why in relation to the "y" problem

*On the sunniest Sunday of July, Dorothy's ponies were exercising in the field while her babies cried as turkeys gobbled and donkeys brayed. Families and other parties picnicked among the daisies. The annual Fair was in progress and would continue for two days, providing opportunities for farmers to view the latest machinery.*

Did you notice the *k* in *picnicked* whereas a related word *picnic* is without the *k*? The extra *k* is inserted after *c* in words such as *panic(ked)* and *traffic(king)* to show that /c/ is to be pronounced as /k/ before the letters *e*, *i* and *y* where we would normally expect /s/ like the first *c* in *circus*.

## After reading about spelling

### Web activity 12.

Identify, categorize, correct and explain problems regarding spelling. Examples originate in recent PEU reports.

- a. *We had a lot in comment.*
- b. *A graped the fone and dialed the numper.*
- c. *The reason why I pig him my self.*
- d. *He was in title to use his gun.*
- e. *He had such a head egg.*



- f. *They a running outside.*
- g. *The rich are getting richer, but the pure are getting more pure. Is that fair?*
- h. *He is happier than he's mother.*
- i. *After a month training I became good eunuch.*
- j. *The birds were sinning in the trees and the sun was shinning.*
- k. *The questions are too difficould.*
- l. *I can speak french.*

### Web activity 13.

It's time for your final reflections:

#### A. Reflections in relation to didactics

1. Sum up what is most important to know about spelling for an English teacher.
  - a. Which principles are important in spelling in English – and how?
    - The phonic principle
    - The etymological principle
    - The ability to recognize words
    - The necessity of a common standard
  - b. Which developmental spelling problems do learners typically have in relation to the areas below? Give some examples.
    - Audio-visual problems
      - a. Homophones
      - b. Silent letters
      - c. Wrong pronunciation
      - d. Spell checkers
    - Analogy problems
    - Semantic problems
    - Capital letters
    - Compound words
    - Casual errors
    - Grammatical problems relating to morphology
    - What are the most important differences between American and British spelling?
  - c. Describe the typical development of spelling?
2. Discuss how you would handle the progression of spelling in your English teaching, if possible compare with what it says in *Fælles Mål for Engelsk*.
  - When would you start teaching spelling – why?
  - What is most important for the pupils to learn?
  - What is easiest and what is most difficult – why?
  - What needs automatization already for young learners?
3. Think back at your own experience as a pupil: did you change your opinion about how to teach spelling?

#### B. Reflections in relation to what you have learnt

- Which areas relating to spelling do you master now?
- In which areas do you need to improve?





## Web activity 14

1. Identify, categorize, correct and explain spelling problems in the passages from learner's texts below. How would you help them? How far have they come in their development? Which principles do they follow?

NB: be careful not to generalize problems into the spelling category, e.g. the mistake *waked* is not a spelling problem but a problem due to overgeneralization of the regular past tense of verbs.

2. Sum up: how serious do you consider spelling problems and how can you help pupils become better at spelling in English?

### Text 14-A

- 1 *I don't no what went rong, but I fink your parents vows vowed abbot you becors the me by fink there*
- 2 *cot bee drakes too the party you teak too.*
- 3 *I am sixteen an in the start wen I begin too go too party's may parents wood laic me to bee at home at*
- 4 *10 pm boot wen you begin too brook the roles the don't trust you ant you can' t not begin too com*
- 5 *letter home becors they fink you also well breech the roles the next time.*

### Text 14-B

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5 *Dear moor*
- 6 *You can see my new address. I 've found a place to live in pries. We hap big house an three*
- 7 *room in deer house an vet hap an big pool.*
- 8 *I live met 3 people in house.*
- 9 *All Dee people in Paris Is expensive am friendly people.*
- 10 *I've got job as a Microsoft I cam god money an me boss is god. I bay an new car ed is an*
- 11 *BMW 50z it is fast car and branch cooler i bet 5000 \$ to data car...I have an god grill is*
- 12 *name is Susie, se hast one cat an 2 dogs, is love animal and is hat an job in ban k. I began in*
- 13 *clap is at food boll.*

IIsdegad  
Paris  
Mondag 13 April 2003

### Text 14-C

- 1 *It's Morten here, as you know from the emails Jan hat mailed to you, I live in Horsens, or it's*
- 2 *in a little town called Torsted, that is a few kilometres out the city of Horsens. It's a one stage*
- 3 *house, that I share with my littlebrother, Jacob, and of cause my mom and dad. I have a job*
- 4 *in Bilka's fruit and vegetables department. I'm very happy about my job, because I talk with*
- 5 *other people all time, and its well paid I get 55.20 Danish money per hour. There are some*
- 6 *extra money after 6 P.M in the weekdays, Saturday after 3 P.M and Sunday there are extra*
- 7 *all the day, but ones in the holydays my boss called me at 9 P.M, so he waked me, that day I*
- 8 *was a little tied of my boss.*

### Text 14-D

- 1 *I was sitting in a restrain, drinking my milkshake, and I got this wired felling, that someone*
- 2 *was watching me, but when I turned around, there was nobody.*
- 3 *Later the same day i was on work, and I got the same felling, that someone is watching me,*
- 4 *but I could not see anyone.*
- 5 *When I got home I didn't think about it, I just spent some time whit my husband...*
- 6 *On my way home, I got the same felling that someone was watching me, I yelled "WHO THE*
- 7 *HELL ARE YOU? ...I heard that someone is coming closer, I got scared, because I was alone,*
- 8 *what if he was planing on reaping me.*



## Links for activities and resources

### Spelling bees

- <http://www.spellingbeethgame.com/>

### Homophones

- <http://www.bifroest.demon.co.uk/misc/homophones-list.html> (list of homophones)
- <http://www.bifroest.demon.co.uk/misc/homophones.html> (almost homophones)
- <http://www.bbc.co.uk/skillswise/topic/words-to-watch-out-for> (quiz on homophones)
- <http://www.bbc.co.uk/skillswise/game/en21watc-game-paris-word> (memory game on homophones)
- <http://www.primaryresources.co.uk/english/englishA8.htm> (links for activities with homophones)
- <http://iteslj.org/c/jokes-puns.html> (Homophone jokes)
- Other poems for homophones:
  - o Richard Caley: "English as a Foreign Language, in John Foster, *Wordspinning*, OUP, 2003, pp. 20-21
  - o Gidney, Pam, "My Proble" in John Foster, *The Trying Flapeze*, OUP, 2004, p. 3
  - o John Cotton, "An Unspelling bea" in *Fire Words: A Book of Wordplay Poems*, Oxford University Press, 2000 p. 49

### Silent letters

- <http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/grammar/learnit/learnitv205.shtml> (listen to words with silent letters)
- <http://www.bbc.co.uk/skillswise/game/en01soun-game-silent-invaders> (silent letter alien invasion game)
- <http://www.primaryresources.co.uk/english/englishA2d.htm#silent> (links for silent letters)
- Poems on silent letters:
  - o Cynthia Rider, *Beware of "Silent Letters"*, in John Foster, *Wordspinning*, OUP, 2003, pp.22
  - o John Foster, "Sir K" in John Foster, John, *Our Teacher's Gone Bananas*, Oxford University Press, 2004, p. 75

### Spelling versus pronunciation

- [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/English\\_orthography](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/English_orthography)

### Spelling in general

- <http://www.woodlands-junior.kent.sch.uk/interactive/literacy.html#7> (spelling games and activities)
- <http://www.manythings.org/e/spelling.html>

### British versus American spelling

- <http://www.tysto.com/articles05/q1/20050324uk-us.shtml>
- <http://www.esltower.com/VOCABSHEETS/britishamerican/British%20vs%20American.pdf>



## Solution

### *The Sting in the Tale (solution for web activity 4)*

*The pale knight sat on the throne and began to tell this tale. I didn't know that she would give me such pain when I first met her. She sent me a letter which I read at once. She begged me to write back and so I asked her to meet me. She rode through the night and we met at 8 when the dew was still on the grass and the faint sun was peeking over the hills. I couldn't believe what I saw. She was a beautiful sight. Her eyes were blue and her long hair was fair and straight. She looked chaste and flawless*

*She gave me a long stare. I responded with a bow and wondered why she was here. Then she asked me to slay and bury the king, her husband. She could wait no longer. Her request made me weak. I am a poor, plain man, but my love for my dear queen was so great that I said I would do it. It was not an easy feat, heaven knows, but at last I got him alone and ran him through with my sword. I dug a deep hole in a place in the garden.*

*Since then, I haven't had a day's peace. I can hardly bear it. My heart is breaking and my nerves are taut. You see, I read her mail because I fear for my fate. Last week, she wrote to an aunt to say that she will marry once more, but first she needs a boy to do some digging for her. Her new flower bed is very sweet, but she'd prefer it if there were a pair.*

### Quotes

- 1 Lord Cromer, "When the English Tongue We Speak", 1902: <http://www.ling.gu.se/~hansv/berra3/tongue.html>
- 2 Trenite, G. Nolst, "The Chaos": <http://www.mipmip.org/tidbits/pronunciation.shtml>
- 3 The words are taken from the following two lists of homophones:  
"Hyppigt forvekslede og fejlstavede ord" in Hanne Wacher & Kim Kjærgaard, *Stifinderen*, Andrico, 2009, p. 101 and "Spelling mistakes and some false friends – a checklist" in Aase Brick-Hansen, Wendy A. Scott, Lars Skovhus Wendy, *Blue Cat – engelsk for tiende, Teacher's Book*, 1999, pp. 178-180
- 4 Based on Mc Carthy, Michael & Felicity O' Dell, *English Vocabulary in Use*, Cambridge University Press, 1994
- 5 Roger Mc Gough, "Streemin", *The Kingfisher Book of Comic Verse*, Kingfisher books ltd, 1986
- 6 Wacher, Hanne & Kim Kjærgaard, *Stifinderen*, Andrico, 2009, pp. 102-103
- 7 Butterfield, Jeremy, *Damp Squid*, OUP, 2008, p. 117.



